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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 001782

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/29/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [KPKO](#) [MOPS](#) [AU](#) [SO](#) [ET](#)

SUBJECT: AFRICAN UNION: KONARE URGES US SUPPORT FOR SOMALI
TFG THROUGH IGASOM

Classified By: A/S Jendayi Frazer for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: African Union (AU) Chairperson Konare told A/S Frazer in a June 25 meeting that the Union of Islamic Courts was currently probing to see how far it could expand, but intended to take over all of Somalia if possible. An expanding UIC would inevitably provoke war with Ethiopia, he remarked. Konare predicted that the UIC rhetoric would focus on three themes: 1) Islamic justice; 2) a Greater Somalia that transcended current international borders; and 3) Anti-Americanism. The AU Chairperson complained that the Arab League had seized control of diplomacy on Somalia through the agreement it brokered recently in Khartoum between the UIC and Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG). He indicated he would talk to the Arab League to "harmonize" positions. The Chairperson told A/S Frazer that Yemen was playing a negative role in Somalia, as was Eritrea. Increasing fundamentalism in Comoros also posed a threat, particularly in combination with the UIC in Somalia. He urged that the international community take steps urgently to deploy an AU/IGAD IGASOM mission to Somalia as soon as possible in order to support and protect the TFG; lifting the UNSC arms embargo would be necessary. Konare said that the June 28-29 AU/IGAD meeting with partner countries in Nairobi could move this initiative forward. He cautioned against pursuing earlier plans to include Sudanese troops in IGASOM. Konare also expressed strong support for Somaliland independence, though he cautioned that now was not the time to press this issue. The Chairperson told A/S Frazer that Yemen was playing a negative role in Somalia, as was Eritrea. END SUMMARY.

2. (SBU) A/S Frazer called on AU Chairperson Alpha Omar Konare June 25. Frazer was accompanied by Charge, CJTF-HOA Commander RADM Rick Hunt, Lt. Commander Mike Sowa, AF Special Assistant Kendra Gaither, AF Somalia/Djibouti deskoff Nole Garey and Pol/Econ Counselor. Konare's special assistant, Amb. Toure, joined the Chairperson. Discussions on Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) will be reported via septel. This message focuses on Somalia.

ISLAMIC COURTS POSE THREAT TO ETHIOPIA AND THE REGION

3. (C) A/S Frazer said that the USG was concerned about developments in Somalia. Reports indicated that the relatively moderate chairman of the UIC had just been replaced by extremist Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, who appeared on the USG's list of terrorists linked to Al Qaeda. Frazer

briefed Konare on the process of convening the International Somalia Contact Group (SCG), which the U.S. envisioned as a coordination, not an executive, body. Convenors had invited the AU to participate and would now invite both IGAD and the Arab League as well. The A/S said the USG had urged the SCG to offer strong public support to the Somali TFG, while reserving judgment on lifting the UN arms embargo on Somalia and deployment of IGASOM. The USG had been afraid that such steps would simply rally popular support in favor of the UIC and harm the TFG. Frazer said the current situation was dangerous and complex, and asked Konare's views.

14. (C) Konare told A/S Frazer that the Union of Islamic Courts was currently probing to see how far it could expand, but intended to take over all of Somalia if possible. An expanding UIC would inevitably provoke war with Ethiopia, he remarked. Konare predicted that the UIC rhetoric would focus on three themes: 1) Islamic justice; 2) a Greater Somalia that transcended current international borders; and 3) Anti-Americanism. He reminded Frazer that the AU had been asking for stronger USG support for the TFG for the previous two years because it appreciated the threat that fundamentalists in Somalia could pose, including a potential attack against the U.S. military base in Djibouti. Konare claimed the AU had also warned against using one militia against another in Somalia. Now the UIC, who were clearly not good people, had gained the upper hand. Increasing fundamentalism in Comoros also posed a threat, particularly in combination with the UIC in Somalia.

15. (C) Konare recalled that the formation of the TFG was the fruit of regionally-supported efforts to build compromise among Somalia's clans. In spite of this international

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legitimacy, the TFG remained weak. If the TFG and UIC were to clash militarily today, the Chairperson said, the TFG would lose and Ethiopia would intervene in Somalia. It was essential, he said, to avoid leaving this problem to Ethiopia, since the UIC would utilize rhetoric about "Greater Somalia" to cause unrest in the Ogaden and further destabilize the whole region. The best course would be to preserve and strengthen the TFG, as well as the regional consensus on Somalia that the TFG embodied.

ARAB LEAGUE SEEKS TO MAKE SOMALIA AN ARAB PROBLEM

16. (C) The AU Chairperson complained that the Arab League (AL) had seized control of diplomacy on Somalia through the agreement it brokered recently in Khartoum between the UIC and TFG. Konare said that he had protested against the AU's exclusion from the Arab League initiative, including to TFG President Yusuf. Konare suggested that the Arab League had its own agenda for the initiative: make Somalia an Arab problem, rather than an African one. This path led ultimately to the issue of "Greater Somalia" and a major problem with Ethiopia. It also reflected the ambitions of Sudanese President Al-Bashir to consolidate his leadership both in the Arab League and eventually in the AU too. Bashir will make a bid to take over as AU Chairman from President Sassou-Nguesso in 2007. The Chairperson told A/S Frazer that Yemen was also playing a negative role in Somalia, as was Eritrea; he asked that the USG talk to these countries and try to modify their behavior, and said he would travel himself to Yemen, where the next Arab League meeting would likely be held. He indicated he would talk to the Arab League to "harmonize" positions.

KONARE: SUPPORT TFG THROUGH IGASOM

17. (C) Konare urged that the international community take steps urgently to deploy an AU/IGAD IGASOM mission to Somalia

as soon as possible in order to support and protect the TFG, even if the UIC opposed such a mission. Konare said that the June 28-29 AU/IGAD meeting with partner countries in Nairobi could move this initiative forward. If the international community did not move quickly, the UIC would rapidly occupy all of Somalia, exile the TFG and provoke a military response from Ethiopia. Lifting the UNSC arms embargo would be necessary for IGASOM deployment. "We can't be hypocrites," the Chairperson said. "The UIC already has the weapons it needs!" He added that lifting the embargo would have to be handled correctly so as not to help the UIC. Konare cautioned against pursuing earlier plans to include Sudanese troops in IGASOM; their participation would complicate the mission. Another alternative would have to be found, he said.

KONARE SUPPORTS SOMALILAND INDEPENDENCE, REGIONAL
INTEGRATION

18. (C) The Chairperson told A/S Frazer that in addition to the TFG, Somaliland also deserved the support of the international community. He recalled that as recently as a year ago, he had opposed Somaliland's desire for independence; now it seemed inevitable. Somaliland's advancement would be good for democracy in the region, Konare added. The reality of Somaliland should be respected, he said, though there was no rush to do so. Moving too quickly might help the UIC. The Chairperson noted that his position prevented him from supporting Somaliland publicly in any case; he was not ready to lay his cards on the table. He lamented that Somaliland's president believed that the AU was "wasting its time" with the TFG. The president did not understand that without the TFG, there would never be a Somaliland. He Konare remarked that Somalis throughout the region would eventually return to their dream of unity, not as a Greater Somali state, but rather through broader regional integration.

This cable has been cleared by AF Assistant Secretary Jendayi Frazer.
HUDDLESTON